

Italy – Università degli Studi di Padova**2013-2014****Report 1**

preparation
exchange/placement application process
<p>It can't be said enough that it's important to start early with the preparations. The application process takes a long time, so it is a good idea to make a check list of all the documents you need. I don't remember having any problems in the application process. I can tell you that you don't need to worry if you don't get a confirmation of your application before the deadline of UniPD; they publish the provisional list of accepted students a few days after the deadline and if you are somehow not on it, there is still a chance to apply. Also, I would recommend putting some effort in your motivation letter, especially if you know there are only few available spots (in my case there was just one for my faculty). A problem you might find with Italian universities is their website/course catalogue, which is mostly in Italian and not always well-organized. I spent an enormous amount of time choosing my courses, but now I know it wasn't necessary. It is of course important to orientate on courses, but the university only publishes the time tables about a week before courses start which could mean you have to change your choices then anyway.</p>
counselling/support at home university
<p>The support that I received from the International Office here was very helpful. Even when you send them an email during your stay abroad they usually respond quickly.</p>
academic preparation
<p>I did not need to do any special academic preparation, as I didn't choose any courses that were too difficult.</p>
language preparation
<p>In my first year of university I did the courses Italian I-II-III. However, for me that was already almost three years ago so I knew I needed to freshen up my Italian in order to be able to follow courses entirely in Italian. The EILC (Erasmus Intensive Language Course) is a great, free opportunity to do this. During a month you will have three hours of classes a day and plenty of opportunities to bring your knowledge in practice while staying in an Italian environment (in my case Venice, which was the closest option to Padova).</p>
finances
<p>I stayed in single room in a student residence for which I paid €275 /month. The daily groceries were a bit more expensive than in the Netherlands in general, for example beer and some meat, but it depends on the kind of product. The good thing about Padova is that you won't have any transport costs because of its small size. Regional trains are not expensive, for example, it costs around seven euros for both ways to/from Venice.</p>
study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>As I wrote before, you should definitely spend some, but not too much time on choosing your courses before applying as you probably will change it after arrival. During the first week (at least) you are allowed to try out as many courses as you'd like, so you can make a final study plan after that. An important tip for anyone going in the first semester: since our semesters overlap and the exam period at UniPD is from end of January until (end of?) February, you might want to check with the professors if it's possible for you to do some exams in advance if necessary. Some courses have their first exam session in February when the Dutch semester has already started. I found the professors to be quite flexible in general, but it's definitely good to ask in advance (and</p>

Italy – Università degli Studi di Padova

before making your final study plan).

academic quality of education/placement activities

I find it hard to compare the quality of education between UniPD and UU, because it's just a completely different way of teaching. I'm only speaking for my faculty, because I know that for example in Psychology their teaching methods are more similar to the ones we are used to.

The way of teaching there seems to be more traditional: there are only lectures, the professor speaks for the entire lesson and students listen. There is of course space for asking questions, but in practice it doesn't happen very often. Another difference is in the way information is brought to the student: in my classes I had to study about two or three entire (Italian) books. Only in two of four classes the professor used PowerPoint, but not in order to indicate the most important points. I was told that on the exam there could be subjects that had only been mentioned during lectures as well as things that can only be found in the books. In short, you have to make the selection yourself. Furthermore, in three of my classes the professor did not give any breaks, which means listening and taking notes continuously for 1.5 hour. Another (positive?) difference is that you are free to choose if you're attending the classes or not, they do not check attendance.

counselling/support at host institution/organisation

The most important advice I would give you is to talk to your professors. Let them know you are an Erasmus student, show them you are trying and if you can, attend the lectures. The impression I got was that they let you pass an exam very easily if they see you tried. Some professors also give you English alternatives for Italian books or even a special program for Erasmus students (i.e. reduced work load).

I did not make use of any counselling at the university.

transfer of credits

My transcript of records hasn't been sent to UU yet, so I can't say anything about this. However, 1 CFU should be equal to 1 ECTS.

student life

welcome/orientation programme

There was a Welcome Day held in the Aula Magna of Palazzo del Bò (the main building of the university). Different people did a talk about different aspects of student life, some were more useful than others, but most of the information was already known. Nevertheless, it was a nice welcome and the Aula Magna (in which Galileo Galilei taught) is amazing.

The rest of the 'orientation' activities are organized by ESN Padova, the Erasmus Student Network. I must say there wasn't a lot of orientation (but it wasn't really necessary either), although I heard the city tour was good.

accommodation

I was offered a room in Residenza Ederle, a student residence with mostly Italian students but also some foreign ones. There are many good things about this residence. The rooms, for example, are small but have all the things you need, like a wardrobe, washbasin, fridge and plenty of room to put your stuff. The common bathrooms are cleaned every morning. Movie nights are organized every week in our own 'movie theatre'. There is a study room, a gym and a bike shed. Also, the location is very good: in less than ten minutes by bike you're in the center or at the station. However, some good things have their cons. The residence is very safe because of the presence of a doorman watching everyone who enters, but on the downside the rules on visitors are very strict. Anyone who isn't recognized as a resident is asked to leave a document. No visitors are

Italy – Università degli Studi di Padova

allowed after 11pm. For students, this might be a problem. The kitchen (three kitchens together actually) is a nice place to meet people, but it is too small for the whole residence (approx. 100 people) and the acoustics are bad, so it's not very nice to have a relaxed dinner and to talk. Our strategy was to cook at 7pm instead of 8-9pm, like most Italians and Spaniards. Another big disadvantage of Ederle is the horrible wi-fi connection. It's bad everywhere except in the 'lobby' downstairs and the study room. Most of the time I could load websites and do small things, but I know some people couldn't. To Skype you'd have to go downstairs. Of course, I don't know if when you're reading this, this problem has already been fixed.

For me the stay at Ederle was quite acceptable for just four months, but had I done a year abroad, I would've looked for a private-rented room. The main reasons are the lack of freedom with visitors and the chaotic kitchen. If you don't care about these things that much though, I would recommend this residence.

leisure/culture

Many activities were organized by ESN. The introduction week (and many other activities) mostly consisted of having drinks at a bar and parties, but there are also some cultural activities like city trips and museum visits. I enjoyed most of them, but at a certain point got a bit bored of them, because they were quite similar. Besides, although I liked meeting fellow Erasmus students, I really wanted to meet Italians as well. I would recommend asking some Italian students about non-ESN parties and going on bar discovery tours yourself instead of going to the same bars with ESN discounts everytime. You will see Padova has a lot more to offer. Unfortunately, since a few years bars in the city center are not allowed to stay open after 12am during the week and 2am in weekends. For this reason all clubs are further from the center. If you look for them though, you can find some nice bars just outside of the center that are open till later.

I won't sum up all the cultural things you can do in or around Padova, they are probably easy to find on the Internet. Some nice cities are easily reachable by train, like Bassano del Grappa, Vicenza, Verona and of course Venice.

suggestions/tips

I have given them already, but as a last thing I would just like to repeat: if you want to feel more integrated and be in contact with locals, don't let the busyness of the first few weeks hold you back from discovering the local student life. My four months were over before I realized, and only the last few weeks I felt like I was starting to get to know more Italians and discovering the best places to go.

conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Yes! Padova is a charming little city where you'll find your way and feel at home quickly. I loved that it's a bike city, perfect for us Dutchies. The university is one of the oldest and best universities of Italy. During my semester there were about 700 foreign students, it's really a student city.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

Just make sure you enjoy every second of your Erasmus adventure, because it's over before you know it!